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GOVERNOR SUPPORTS COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano says she is encouraged by the five-point immigration plan announced by the President in remarks to the nation tonight.

One key part of the plan is an enhanced presence of the National Guard in a support role along the U.S.- Mexican border, paid for by the Federal government. Over the next year, as part of their annual training, a total of 6,000 National Guard troops will be rotated through border duty in the southwestern United States. After one year, that number will be gradually scaled back as more Border Patrol agents are trained and added to the civilian forces at the border.

“Tonight was the speech. Now – from tonight forward – is the time for true implementation,” said Governor Napolitano. “A comprehensive approach, such as the President outlined - that includes strong enforcement, a temporary worker program, employer sanctions and a rational plan to handle the 11 million people already in the country illegally – is the only way we can ultimately deal effectively with the issue of illegal immigration.”

Last December, Governor Napolitano began corresponding with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about the possibility of enhanced use of the Guard in exactly the fashion described tonight by the President.

In her State of the State address in January 2006, the Governor said:

“The federal government has promised more border patrol agents for Arizona.”

“But, until they are here, I have asked Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld to invoke article 32 of the federal code, which allows the federal government to pay for us to station the National Guard at our border. That financial support would allow the Guard to expand its presence and become even more involved in enforcing the rule of law at the border.”

Over the next five months, in correspondence and direct conversation with Secretary Rumsfeld, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, and their respective staffs, the Governor continued to press for appropriate Guard involvement.

“After all these months, it is a relief to see the federal government step up to the plate and more fully share the cost of dealing with illegal immigration,” said Napolitano. “Now, Congress needs to do as the President has asked, and pass a comprehensive immigration reform plan.”

ADD TWO

There are already Arizona Guard personnel at the border providing drug interdiction and infrastructure support. Arizona National Guard members have been assigned to the Arizona-Mexico border in various capacities for nearly 20 years.

Added the Governor, "The President is right – we need not militarize the border; we are not at war with Mexico. We need to facilitate legal commerce, and, at the same time, do everything realistically within our power to interrupt illegal drug trafficking and the smuggling of human beings."

Attached is a list of "Frequently Asked Questions" regarding deployment of the Guard, as well as a timeline of interaction between the Governor and the federal government.